

# THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

*This bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religions Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war, and to provide information concerning the British Churches in wartime, as well as their contribution to post-war reconstruction.*

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## NORWAY—ARREST DURING CONFIRMATION

News continues to be received of pressure on the faithful members of the Norwegian Church. A recent incident, reported in the Swedish paper, *Dagens Nyheter*, shows the complete lack of reverence and respect which characterizes the Quisling and Nazi officials.

"A pastor had gathered 16 Catechism children in some premises outside the town of Lillehammer for Confirmation, with their parents present. A police agent was informed by his fiancée that a celebration of Confirmation was being arranged 'in the woods.'

"The police agent entered the premises during the pastor's sermon and shouted: 'You are arrested.' The pastor turned to the children and said: 'You have done your Catechism and passed your Examination, which qualifies you for Confirmation. Each one of you will receive your certificate. Now let us sing: 'A safe stronghold our God is still.' The pastor laid aside his liturgical vestments and followed the police agent, accompanied by all the congregation. The children ran up on every side crying: 'Persecution of Christianity 1944.' The police agent reached the police station by side roads."

*Svenska Morgonbladet* reports that "in Norwegian circles it is reckoned that 31 priests are under arrest.

"Four are in prison in Germany, the others are in German or Norwegian prisons in Norway. 81 priests have been expelled from their parishes. At first they were allowed to choose their own place of residence. They chose, by preference, those districts where there were no priests so as to replace the others who had been deported.

"Now those expelled are forced to go to Lillehammer. They are not allowed to leave the town and must report to the police every day. It is thought that the authorities will force all the expelled priests, who are dis-

persed in different parts of Norway, to settle at Lillehammer."

### Death of a Lutheran Priest at Grini

Towards Easter about a hundred victims of the Nazis were imprisoned in a special barracks at Grini. They were priests, teachers, doctors, lawyers, professors, etc.

During recent months papers, pamphlets and reviews have been distributed in the concentration camps. An S.S. officer regularly visited the camp, and especially the "barracks of the professors," in order to check the effect of the reading matter.

In the end he was furious because the prisoners remained faithful to their principles and continued to condemn the new order.

One day he lost patience and condemned the prisoners to an extra hour of exercise under the direction of the famous *Scharführer* Kuntze.

The men were compelled to jump, to bend their knees, to lie down and get up immediately, to "creep like a snake," to play leap frog, etc., etc.

Only the sick and those over 55 were dispensed from this punishment. Pastor Arne Thu, aged 53, was forced to take part. He fell exhausted, without strength to continue, but he was forced to stay in his place to the end. He died some days later.

It was not the first time that the pastor had been given such punishment, he had received it on a previous occasion because he had preached to the prisoners. He was arrested after his Christmas sermon in 1941 and had been longer in prison than any other Norwegian priest.

### Threats to Quislings

*Aftontidningen*, of July 21st, reports that "on the occasion of the death of the Nor-

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wegian Pastor, Arne Thu, in the Grini concentration camp, Quisling bishops all received threatening letters. The Nazi bishop of Oslo, Frøyland, has left Oslo and installed himself at Vågå, in Gudbrandsdalen. The following is the text of the letters:—"Everyone in the country now knows that Pastor Arne Thu, of Vestbu, has been killed by the direction of the German sadist, Knutze. Besides the Germans we consider as responsible for his death a certain number of persons belonging to Nasjonal Smaling, who are provided with power and therefore ought to be responsible for what happens in the religious sphere. We shall consider you and the other so-called bishops among the guilty if you do not immediately resign and give up all your religious functions, publishing your resignation as an official protest against the inhuman and anti-Christian treatment which has resulted in the death of a priest of the Norwegian Church, so respected and able. If you do not heed this warning, you must be prepared to face all the consequences, both before and after the end of the war." Frøyland has sent the letter to a Nazi priest, asking him to send it to the police without telling them that it is done at the suggestion of the Nazi bishop."

### New Attacks Against the Church

On June 20th *Aftontidningen* reported:

"One-hundred-and-four Norwegian prisoners have just been deported from Grini to Germany. Among them is Pastor Peder Scheie, of the Parish of Skedsmo, who was arrested six months ago because he refused to betray professional confidences.

"The arrest of Pastor Scheie is a flagrant violation of Norwegian law, it is also an attack on the confidence of the people in their priests.

"The authorities have not attained their object. Pastor Scheie maintained his firmness and the other priests protested. The Germans came to the help of the Quisling authorities.

"It was the Germans who arrested the pastor and sent him to the concentration camp, and who are now deporting him to Germany.

"On the occasion of the burial of the Nazi inspector of police, Lindvig, Pastor Lunke, of Ringebu, was told to fly the flag at half-mast. The order was given by telephone. He refused. On the day of the burial the Nazis invaded the vicarage garden and hoisted the flag in the absence of the priest."

### Christian Youth in Norway's Fight

A leader of one of the Christian Youth Movements reports as follows on the situation of Christian youth in Norway:

"In certain respects current events have produced a spiritual awakening among the people. They have been led to see that spiritual values have more worth than material ones. Church congregations are much larger than before the war, but we cannot speak of a revival in the Christian sense of the word. Among youth, however, interest in religious questions is much keener; for example, at meetings organized by the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. the attendances have increased. Unfortunately, students have not shown a similar interest . . .

"Christian students have been active in the Church's struggle as well as in the national struggle. It was precisely because they were Christians that they were conscious of their responsibility . . . It has been encouraging indeed to receive news of the intense Christian activity carried on by the Christians among the students deported to Germany. Before he left, one of them, a member of the Student Christian Movement, said: 'I am so grateful to God that I am among those deported. That means an immense missionary task.' Almost all the students of the University of Oslo are now either in Germany or in concentration camps in Norway. There are some who have sought refuge in Sweden, and others are in hiding, waiting their opportunity of going there. That is why there can be no Student Christian Movement meetings . . .

"The two S.C.M. papers have been forbidden for a long time now. The official reason is paper rationing, but in reality almost every Christian paper has been suppressed. No more Bibles or New Testaments are being printed . . .

"We know that by our sufferings we have been brought nearer to God than we were before. Great tasks and great Christian ministries await us in the after-war years."  
(I.C.P.I.S., Geneva.)

### News of Bishop Berggrav

A recent message from Norway states that Bishop Berggrav, who has been under house arrest since 1942, is in good health. He works hard, and not only at his desk. He has permission to work in the open air for one hour daily. He is not allowed to see anyone and, although this complete solitude is hard to bear, his faith and courage are as great as ever.

(I.C.P.I.S., Geneva.)



## DANISH CHURCH TO-DAY

The following article was published in a Danish Church underground paper in June:—

"Many things point to the fact that the Germans will take sharper measures against the Danish Church. The Pastoral Letter in March caused great anger at Dagmarhus, even if they apparently took it in a very superior manner—when read during the radio church service it was mentioned as being 'a mistake.' The arrest of Pastor Dahl in Horsens, must be considered as a milestone in the history of the Church, the chief reason for the arrest having been given as his 'spiritual illegal activity.'

"Sermons on April 9th caused further discontent at Dagmarhus, where they wished to forbid the clergymen to mention this day as important for the Danes.

"A long series of violent attacks on the Church and its men followed. *National-socialisten* (April 21st) says straight out about Bishop Fuglsang Damgaard, that 'it is considered absolutely necessary to remove him from his office in order to create peace and a wholesome atmosphere in the Church.' The Church is accused of being a political, agitating and impudently provoking institution. Furthermore, for the first time attacks against *Kirkens Front* have been made on the radio and also in the above-mentioned publication. We have been informed that Dagmarhus considers *Kirkens Front* as the 'illegal paper which at the moment it is most important to get at,' as they wish to take sharper measures against the clergymen.

"Should the storm arise, we all know where we stand. In the past we have found each other and found the line Christ has shown us when we are fighting Satan. We will go into the fight and its sufferings in gratitude that we are allowed to profess to the very end that His word and nothing else is our law.

"We also have every reason to attack, in view of the events which have developed in our country lately. Since the disorganization of the judicial system 'a circle of clergymen' have voiced their views on behalf of the Church, but since then much has happened. The increased terror, which defies every war law and every human consideration, is spreading unbounded without any effort to hide its German originators and their Danish Nazi comrades. Every Christian and human ideal is trampled upon by this paganism and barbarism: the system of hostages, German-

controlled assassination, the plundering by the Schalburg Corps which the Germans allow, and the execution of innocent people as reprisals. We can never make the excuse that we did not see the evil in the enemy. . . .

"Some words spoken by Pastor Aage Dahl just before his arrest are of current interest. They may serve to make clear the line we have followed and will continue to follow whatever it may cost us.

"It is not right to preach hate towards human beings, but against the diabolic deeds they perform. Preaching should be against violence, injustice and lies. It would mean compromising if one did not do that. Many people say "let us take it calmly, and everything will be all right." That is not Christianity, it is paganism.

"Christian services should be characterized by the times, because the times are causing us spiritual difficulties. A sermon to-day must deal with these things. The gospel may always be the same, but its message differs according to whether the times are evil or good."

## DEATH OF BRITISH CHAPLAIN

The Bishop of Chelmsford, writing in his *Diocesan Chronicle* for August, pays the following tribute to the memory of one of his clergy:—

"My monthly letter would be very sad reading if I were to record all the losses of sons suffered by our friends. But I find it impossible not to refer to the particularly tragic and yet splendid death of George Parry.

"Three of Canon and Mrs. Parry's four splendid sons all volunteered for service on the outbreak of war. At that time George had been ordained only one year. He was anxious to join the army as a Chaplain but I had to tell him that he had insufficient experience and that he must remain at his post at home. But after a few months he begged for reconsideration and the upshot was I recommended him for a Chaplaincy. In those days the authorities expected a chaplain to be at least three years in Orders, but I pressed George's claim on the ground of his exceptional suitability. He was accepted, but it was not enough for him to serve as an ordinary chaplain. He volunteered to serve in a parachute regiment and shared all the hair-raising experiences of the soldiers he ministered to. Needless to say, such a chaplain had the love and respect of all the officers and men.



"On D-Day, George 'jumped' with his men on French soil and the parachute soldiers were in the forefront of the bitter fighting that day. A splendid account of the dreadful yet glorious affair was given in a London paper. It told us how the wounded were collected in a dressing-station and that George found his way through the darkness to minister to his men. Unexpectedly the Nazis broke their way back again and burst into the dressing-station in a condition of berserk fury. They began to bayonet the wounded and dying men, and George rushed forward to defend them. He was, of course, unarmed, but the Germans leapt on him with their weapons and so George died, in the likeness of his Master, for the men he loved and served.

"Canon and Mrs. Parry had already lost one son in the war and the death of the eldest, heroic though the circumstances were, is a shattering blow, for George had a fine future before him in the Church. He was a singularly lovable boy and combined a most engaging modesty with unusual ability. He was one of those people who are always called by their Christian name—an unmistakable evidence of unusual capacity to make friends. He was one of the most promising boys ordained by me, and judging by the admirable work he did at St. John's, Leytonstone, and Emmanuel, Forest Gate, I have no doubt that a most useful and successful life in the ministry lay before him. Our most loving sympathy goes out to Canon and Mrs. Parry, and I can truly tell them that I grieve with them for I have suffered the loss of one who was my son in the Faith, and one whose death is a grievous loss to the Church in this Diocese. And yet if George had to go, how could he have left us more gloriously? 'All the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.'"

### PRAYING FOR VICTORY

The Archbishop of York discusses the rightfulness of praying for victory and for our enemies in his *Diocesan Leaflet*. "There are many," writes Dr. Garbett, "who find it very difficult to pray for victory; they know our enemies are doing the same, and they think it more Christian simply to commend our cause to the Judge of the whole earth, leaving Him to decide whether He will grant victory to us or our foes.

"I understand their scruples, but I have no hesitation myself both in praying for victory and urging others to do so. A Christian has no right to fight unless he can ask God to grant success to the cause for which he is

prepared to give his life. If he cannot pray for it, he ought not to fight for it.

"It is more difficult to answer the other question. Christ tells us to pray for our enemies, but we wonder how we can do this without insincerity. We can, however, pray that they are brought to repent of the evil they have done and that they with us may learn to serve God. We should pray for their wounded (our doctors care for the physical wounds of those who are captured), for their prisoners of war, and for the women and children who suffer in fear, hunger and want. Prayers now for our enemies, in accordance with the command of Christ, will help to give us the wisdom and sympathy necessary for the day of victory, when we shall have to re-educate from the idolatry of war to the love of peace the millions of German youth, whose minds have been perverted by lying propaganda."

### JUNGLE CHURCH

The following item is taken from the *Church Times* of August 4th:—

"Flt. Lieut. Frank Reynolds, a member of St. Margaret's Church, Aspley, Nottingham, who is now with the R.A.F. on the Arakan front in Burma, was the moving spirit in the creation of what is believed to be the first jungle church at the fighting front. In a letter, printed in the Aspley parish magazine, he describes how he decided to turn an unused basha hut into a permanent little station church, and with one or two other officers and some of the men set about building an altar and lectern of bamboo, and making a bell from a shell case.

"'It might have been an English village church at home,' he writes of the finished product. 'By Sunday morning one or two more things had appeared, the chief one being a really lovely reading stand for the altar for Communion, and two fine candlesticks, all made by the men. On Sunday morning, Clarke, our cook, decorated the church with flowers. There were red and white blossoms and green leaves all round the pulpit and lectern, and round the windows. He had sent followers out into the jungle for them. The smell from them was lovely.

"'It really looked a perfect picture. Everything is of lovely bamboo—floor, walls, lectern and pulpit, and the altar and serving table are completely covered in pale blue cloth, with a gold cross on the front of the altar, and the whole east wall of the church, behind the altar, is covered with a hanging dark blue cloth.'"